

## **What is Life Planning?**

**Imagine...**

*As a result of injury or serious illness, you are taken to the hospital in an ambulance.*

*Your condition leaves you unable to speak for yourself.*

*How do you want to be treated?*

*Do your loved ones know what you would choose for your health care?*

**Life Planning gives you a way to better control your health care decisions.**

**Life planning** is an organized approach to thinking, reflecting and understanding your current state of health and your goals, values and choices for future treatment decisions. It focuses on your decisions for how you want to live well.

**Life planning** allows YOU to choose your decision maker. You choose that person— one who knows you the best and who will honor YOUR choices for living well. Your decision maker makes decisions for you when you are unable to do so.

**Life planning** includes starting discussions with loved ones as well as with your doctors. These discussions assist in guiding the physician to offer treatment options that closely match your needs and wishes.

There are many medical options available in times of serious illness as well as in times of possible death. Caregivers —both doctors and loved ones —who understand your wishes, are crucial to ensuring that you are cared for as you have chosen.

**Life planning** is also a gift to your family. When a family member is asked to make decisions for you without being prepared, the stress of those decisions is severe. When a person suffers from a serious illness, the family experiences many emotions, fears, and challenges during this crisis. Research has shown that family members who know the loved one's wishes have much less stress. In the event that the loved one dies, their grief experience is also lessened. In describing their grief, family members will often say, "I am sad that she died, but I am relieved that I was able to honor her wishes" or "Although it was hard to let him go, it was easier because I knew what he wanted."